
Issuing Letters of Introduction and Addressing Minutes:

A Review of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Governance Processes for the use of the Yearly Meeting Community

Approved by the Quaker Life Council and the Administrative Council of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, December 2019

Purpose of this Review

The Faith and Practice book of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (PYM) contains various guidelines regarding letters of introduction¹ and certain types of minutes. There are three types of minutes upon which we train our focus:

- Minutes of Concern²
- Minutes for Religious Service³
- Minutes of Travel for Religious Service⁴

Alongside Letters of Introduction, this document elaborates on the steps taken for each type at the yearly-meeting level.

Why the Councils Undertook this Review of PYM Processes

We draw a distinction between policy, procedure, and practice. Governance bodies, such as PYM's three councils, are generally responsible for drafting only policies. We allow procedures and practices to be developed by those entities under the care of our councils. However, the processes outlined in this document relate to issues at the core of the Quaker tradition. They were drafted and approved by our councils and therefore establish an exception to the general policy-only rule. They are written in the simplest of terms, and they refer to the wisdom of Faith and Practice whenever possible.

Additionally, we honor the traditional Quaker understanding that responsibility and authority to recognize, cultivate, and care for gifts, leadings, and ministries rest primarily with the local Quaker community. Occasionally, local Quaker community can mean something other than a monthly or quarterly meeting, such as a worship group or peace center.

¹ Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, *Faith and Practice*, (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 2018), p 74.

² PYM Faith & Practice, 2018, p 246.

³ PYM Faith & Practice, 2018, pp 16,245.

⁴ PYM Faith & Practice, 2018, p 74.

Issuing Letters of Introduction

As stated in Faith and Practice, “Friends intending to travel benefit from obtaining a letter of introduction from their home meeting. Such letters usually state the fact of membership, give some account of the individual’s participation and witness in the affairs of our religious society, and express such greetings as are deemed appropriate.”⁵ The letter of introduction is usually written and signed by the clerk of the home monthly meeting and/or sometimes the home quarterly meeting.

In cases when someone is traveling to represent Philadelphia Yearly Meeting as a whole, it may also be appropriate for a letter of introduction to be written for them by the clerk of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. This would be especially pertinent when the individual is engaging in work or witness that is not under any minute of travel for religious service. One might imagine, for example, writing letters of introduction for those who represent PYM on the governance bodies of other Quaker organizations.

Addressing Minutes of Concern

Minutes of concern are those statements approved in the course of the spiritual discernment of a body of Friends, such as a monthly meeting, that convey religious commitment regarding past or present issues in Quakerism or the larger society.

1. Typically, a minute of concern comes to the yearly meeting community through a quarterly meeting. On occasion a minute of concern may be submitted to the yearly meeting directly from a monthly meeting or worship group. Additionally, a group within PYM may submit a minute of concern directly such as a collaborative, a continuing care retirement community, a community of Quaker youth or young adults, etc.
2. The quarterly meeting clerk (or clerk of the group within PYM) brings the minute of concern to the yearly meeting community by submitting it to the Presiding Clerk of PYM, after the concern has followed the guidelines in PYM’s Faith and Practice.⁶
3. The clerk of PYM will bring the minute to the PYM Governance Leadership (Council clerks, PYM clerk, and Treasurer).
4. The Governance Leadership will direct the minute to Quaker Life Council, Administrative Council, or both.
5. The council(s) responsible for the minute will season the minute of concern and discern how the minute will be acted upon.
6. Transparency and timely feedback about the discernment process is important. Therefore, following initial discernment, a report of council decisions and actions shall be shared with/sent to the clerks of monthly and quarterly meetings including the content of the minute received and actions proposed at the yearly meeting level.

⁵ Ibid

⁶ PYM Faith & Practice, 2018. See specifically pages 16 and 17 regarding individual and corporate discernment as well as 245 and 246 regarding minutes of concern.

7. Friends then carry forward ministry of the concern with the guidance, support, and accountability of the monthly meeting, quarterly meeting and Philadelphia Yearly Meeting together.
8. A timeframe should be established for reporting about the work in ministry and continued discernment should happen regarding whether the calling for this work continues.

Addressing Minutes for Religious Service

From time to time, a monthly meeting may seek to recognize the spiritual gifts, leading, and/or ministry of an individual in a minute for religious service. Regarding this, a Pacific Yearly Meeting Pamphlet⁷ and a Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting Pamphlet⁸ are highly recommended supplemental readings. PYM's Faith and Practice also describes individual discernment as it may relate to religious service on pages 16 and 245 of the 2018 printed edition.⁹ Monthly meetings retain the authority and responsibility to recognize a gift, leading, and/or ministry and to minute this recognition as such. Usually the recognition is accompanied by support and accountability through clearness committees¹⁰ and spiritual care committees.¹¹ The monthly meeting may seek to have a minute for religious service recognized by a larger body of Friends, perhaps by the quarterly or yearly meeting.

In the event that a meeting seeks further recognition of a minute for religious service by PYM, the following process takes place:

1. The minute for religious service should first be forwarded to the quarterly meeting where the minute may be endorsed by the quarterly meeting.
2. The endorsed minute may then be forwarded to the Presiding Clerk of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.
3. Typically, the PYM clerk is expected to forward the endorsed minute for religious service to the Quaker Life Council (QLC).
4. The Quaker Life Council reads the minute for religious service into the minutes of the relevant Quaker Life Council meeting.
5. The QLC then forwards the minute for religious service to the Presiding Clerk so it can also to be read into the minutes of Continuing or Annual Sessions.
6. At both the Quaker Life Council meeting and Continuing or Annual Sessions, the minute for religious service is not endorsed, but received. The minute is received

⁷ Pacific Yearly Meeting. "pacificyearlymeeting.org." *Pacific Yearly Meeting*. 06/01/2009. 03/12/2019. <http://www.pacificyearlymeeting.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/MandLFaithfulnessInAction.pdf>

⁸ Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting. "cpmm.org." *Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting*. 03/1995. 03/12/2019. <https://www.fgcquaker.org/cloud/central-philadelphia-monthly-meeting/resources/responding-calls-ministry>

⁹ PYM Faith & Practice, 2018, pp 16,245.

¹⁰ PYM Faith & Practice, 2018, pp 16, 240-242.

¹¹ PYM Faith & Practice, 2018, pp 243-245.

and not endorsed at the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting level because it is our practice to reserve endorsement and the accompanying responsibilities of care and accountability to the monthly and sometimes the quarterly meeting.

7. The clerks of the Quaker Life Council and of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting sign the minute with language that indicates the yearly meeting and Quaker Life Council received the minute and that it was read into the minutes of both bodies.
8. Individuals whose minutes for religious service have been received by the QLC and the yearly meeting in session will also be expected to submit a report on their work at a later date, set by the individual with the minute at the time that it is received. Such reports will also be read into the minutes of Quaker Life Council and of Continuing or Annual Sessions.
9. The process of receiving a minute, reviewing it by the Presiding Clerk and then by the Quaker Life Council is expected to be done in a timely manner. Likewise, when a minute is submitted for reception those submitting it must understand that the process takes time to proceed through the clerk's hands and the QLC agenda and may not be completed by the next time the yearly meeting gathers for Annual or Continuing Sessions.

Procedure for Recognizing Ministry that is Associated with a Profession

On occasion, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting will receive requests to forward documentation that indicates a person is recognized by Friends to serve in a profession associated with their ministry. Usually, in instances such as these, the calling is to become a chaplain, pastoral counselor, CPE supervisor, etc., but the calling can be many other things as well, depending on the needs of the person and the minute for religious service that their monthly meeting passed in spiritual care and accountability.

If a member of a PYM monthly meeting is under the care of this meeting in pursuit of a professional calling and would like Philadelphia Yearly Meeting to provide documentation of whatever type (within reason) to demonstrate to an external organization or a government the veracity of this person's calling to do the professional work, the following process will be followed:

1. The person should first seek for their monthly or quarterly meeting to provide the required information to the relevant professional association.
2. In the event that the monthly or quarterly meeting is not equipped to provide the documentation, then PYM staff can facilitate it. Individuals must allow for at least 15 business days for PYM staff to gather the appropriate documentation and send it in the required ways. We cannot guarantee meeting the deadline of any request submitted within fewer than 15 business days, and we highly encourage Friends to give as much time as possible. Contact the PYM Associate Secretary for Program and Religious Life.

3. Before the 15-day window begins, the person must be able to show a minute of support, care or endorsement (if applicable) from their monthly meeting, and the clerk of their monthly meeting must communicate via email or phone to PYM staff their assurance that the person remains in good standing with the meeting community.
4. The person must provide to PYM staff detailed instructions regarding the forms that need to be completed, the supporting material required, and the proper contact information to forward the material.
5. In rare cases, due to legal, ethical or operational reasons, we will not release documents to external organizations or governments, and we therefore reserve the right to decline any requests. In the event of a declination, staff will notify the individual making the request

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting does not certify the professional credentials, training, or qualifications for holding any professional position or for participating in any professional field. We are merely occasionally asked to confirm to external organizations and governments that a person is a member of our Faith community in good standing and under the spiritual care and accountability of their monthly meeting in the pursuit of a particular leading, which happens to be professional in nature.

Addressing Minutes of Travel for Religious Service

Minutes of travel for religious service are those minutes setting out recognition of a gift, leading, or ministry that an individual intentionally shares with other Quaker and/or non-Quaker communities. The monthly, and sometimes quarterly, meeting remains the sole body with responsibility for the clearness and care of traveling religious service. Especially if the travel extends beyond the geography of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, the monthly meeting or quarterly meeting may ask for further endorsement from PYM.

1. A minute of travel for religious service begins in the monthly meeting, following what is described in PYM's Faith and Practice.¹²
2. The relevant Quarterly Meeting is expected to endorse a minute of travel for religious service before it is submitted to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.
3. If the travel may extend beyond Philadelphia Yearly meeting, the minute of travel for religious service is forwarded by the quarter to the PYM's Presiding Clerk.
4. The PYM clerk forwards the minute to the Quaker Life Council.
5. If the Quaker Life Council observes that the traveling ministry also requires additional seasoning before it can be endorsed, which would be an atypical observation, then the council may constitute a Gifts and Leadings Sprint made of

¹² PYM Faith & Practice, 2018, pp74-75.

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- approximately three people. This sprint would meet with relevant parties, season the minute of travel, and bring back a recommendation to the Quaker Life Council.
6. The Quaker Life Council is expected to endorse the minute. Thereafter, the Council forwards it to the PYM Presiding Clerk for endorsement at yearly meeting in session.
 7. The minute of travel for religious service is read into the minutes of Quaker Life Council and of Continuing or Annual Sessions.
 8. The minute is also signed by the clerks of the Quaker Life Council and of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, indicating that it was endorsed and that it was read into the minutes of both bodies.
 9. Individuals whose minutes of travel for religious service have been endorsed by QLC and the yearly meeting in session will also be expected to submit a report on their work at a later date set by the individual with the minute at the time that it is received. Such reports will also be read into the minutes of Quaker Life Council and of Continuing or Annual Sessions.
 10. The process of receiving a minute, reviewing it by the PYM Presiding Clerk and then by the Quaker Life Council is expected to be done in a timely manner. Likewise, when a minute is submitted for reception those submitting it must understand that the process takes time to proceed through the clerk's hands and the QLC agenda and may not be completed by the next time the yearly meeting gathers for annual or continuing sessions.